

October 23, 2003

Paul Dabbs, Division of Planning
Department of Water Resources
Bulletin 160
901 P Street
Sacramento, Ca 95814

Subject: Working Landscapes/ Gawking Landscapes

Dear Paul:

These comments are for the Working Landscapes Meeting which I am precluded from attending, I have made some arbitrary bifurcations such as working/ gawking landscapes, Water consumptive/water productive landscapes and intensive/extensive agricultural landscapes for clarity and focus purposes. I will also discuss watersheds as upper, or montane, middle, or foothill, and lower, or valley, areas although this is a practice of separating that I also find counterproductive rather than looking at the areas as a whole.

Upper watersheds

First a little rant concerning the false paradigm of watersheds as parks or a gawking landscape.

At the Bulletin 160 meeting in Tulare the question was asked: "Are there any watersheds in California's hydrologic regions? The Sierra Club wants us to save watersheds".

Though amusing, this does show the attempt to do for watersheds what buzzword diversity did for wildlife; it shifted funds to parks.

Thomas Hayden's THE LOST GOSPEL OF RELIGION, POLITICS AND THE ENVIRONMENT has been adopted by some in state government- enough to have a policy effect. This is why I want Parks removed from Water Parks and wildlife and put into another committee in the assembly as it has in the Senate and initiatives to have an environmental assessment. The plan to give park security statewide warden powers seems most unwise. Tom Jefferson's first amendment wall to separate Church and State should have razor wire on top to keep out the cults.

Upper Watersheds are working landscapes; The Forest Service being in the Dept. of Ag for a reason. Forests are mandated to be managed for multiple use, though often qualifying as "lands of many abuses". The changing of the upper watersheds from working landscapes to gawking landscapes, changes them from multiple use which includes water retention and production to a romantic same stage monoculture which is water consumptive as the watersheds change

UC extension predicts vegetation change anyway in the montane as well as valley areas. resulting from global warming.

The forests have, at best, but ten percent of their needed management being done.

The willy-nilly conversion to wilderness status will exacerbate the situation. If two million acres be converted, then, arguably, two million acre feet be lost, The banning of grazing as a management tool is counterproductive.

Dams can be presumed to counter the effects of global warming, but mass gravity dams do not produce water by squishing it from the ground. Upper watershed restoration can provide perhaps the most bang for the buck in obtaining new water.

Foothill and middle watershed areas provide also promise for water generation. The Las Tablas RCD of the Central Coast is entering a program promoting watersheds restored for water and wildlife under the auspices of hunting as an economic incentive to the private landowner. This is not novel in other states and may become popular in this one, if not with Lord Chatterley.

The CDFFP FRAAP report of yore makes many good points and staff should be familiar with it or have USFS or CDFFP personnel as tech advisors. One point made concerns the cutting of the oak woodland foothills for “range improvement” the result was a uniform drying of the area, exotic intrusion and loss of cattle loafing areas.

The exotic intrusions transpire enough water to fill a reservoir. I have heard objections to using herbicides as they kill alligators. True, the alligator population has crashed in the State, but more to the point is the high cost. What seems cost effective is goat grazing, but there is little market for goat products. The DWR may wish to consider if it is cost effective to do goat promotions such as are done for other commodities in the state. Got goats. The cheese is great with tofu.

A further rant on exotic weeds is to note that there exists no coherent weed management approach. Foothills have management areas, but the southern Valley has none. These are for mainly private lands, as the agencies seem to prefer their own organization. Agencies often concentrate on ACE (Agency Cubicle Escape) meetings in resort areas. Looking at the website for where the grants went, one sees that none went to the mandated CCC for labor. This was euphemistically explained as all the projects were in planning phase. Calfed, having acquired lands without any management plans, commenced weed studies for a later interagency workshop. Wow, how impressive and in keeping with its science program.

Reservoirs can not only apply to water, but also to weeds. State areas such as the Parks at Woodson or Millerton or the Wildlife areas at Tehama or Oroville are weed reservoirs which spread to other areas by natural means or vehicle travel.

It is interesting to note that Pacific Research considers cotton a weed but, true to political correctness, omits consideration of exotics so I will make up the lack.

The Midwest practice of small dams to reduce floodwater velocity while capturing these waters for stock use and recharge is definitely cost effective and the cost share may be worth DWR picking up some of the tab. A sell to FEMA may also gain some funds to add to the USDA share.

Changing oak woodlands to vineyards changes them to water consumptive for a glutted product. There may be a benefit by the exotic sharpshooter in these landscapes, but the lands should be deemed a debit to the statewide water account.

Lower Working lands

These are generally water consumptive

To seek water use efficiency by non use makes no sense semantically as well as technically.

The UC report predicts a vegetation change here also. But retirement into weeds which spread to productive lands is water inefficient, iniquitous, and, I presume, legally a risk factor. In lieu of straight retirement consider the following options:

- reversion to grazing
- dry land farming
- conversion to habitat for pheasant clubs
- conversion to habitat to sell mitigation credits

These options all should require some water for establishment and this should be factored in. Lands should never have water cut off but should be weaned off where desirable.

Adam Smith's prescription.

Subsidies can become an end in themselves. As the lower and central areas of the Great Valley become commuter communities the new arrivals are more apt to resent purchasing ag's water. True, Fresno is too far to commute to the coast, and a drive through it leaves one with the impression that it is hopeless, and it never will catch on to the inequities of being meterless. The Capitol City feels that its denizens are to make rules for others, exempting itself, and should be named Sacrosanct. Other areas will probably react as ag becomes less a dominant political force and local subsidies will cease and even calls for State subsidies cessation will occur.

As the water price, therefore, rises, then there will be a cropping pattern change. High end specialty crops will take over. In California, specialty crops need not necessitate, a conversion from extensive to intensive operations. Because of land costs, and the predominance of purchase monopolies, large acreage is necessary for an economic unit. Economies of scale and the large capital outlays necessary for crop conversion will probably necessitate more corporate involvement unless cooperatives or government loan guarantee programs are begun or extended. While mobile irrigation labs are current state of the art, in the future automated sensing and application systems will make them seem like Model As. The new technology will also be more expensive than Model As. So as values change, the subsidy type may also change.

During drought, trees and vines must receive a minimum of water to be kept alive which will be a statewide impact compared to current row crops which are shut off. Another

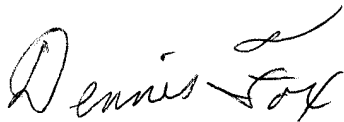
factor occurs at the end of a drought when tree crops naturally produce bumper crops and prices plummet.

I went to the Three Gorges Project and saw its role in changing China from a marginal agricultural economy to an industrial one. A financing scheme the country has is kind of a national rent to own. For example, a foreign country builds infrastructure and receives the profits from its use until the capital outlay and a return is amortized. Should California emerge from the economic third world where it currently resides, it would make sense if the Department were to be involved such a scheme.

- o Any extra funds left in California seem to get pooped away anyway.
- o The funds would return as a rainy, or non-rainy, day account.
- The western pacific seems to be a natural area with which to build marketing relationships.
- Something China seems to have is potential consumers

In summary, working landscapes should remain so to produce water and other renewable resources and not become gawking landscapes to satisfy cultish, or political agendas. There are other venues for those who seek political change. The future of this States industrial and informational ages seem problematic, so conservation, not preservation, and wise utilization of the natural resources of the State is necessary to its future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dennis Fox". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name and address.

Dennis Fox
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